12-2003

(Re)imagining an urban identity : Knoxville and its 1982 International Energy Exposition

Jennifer Bradley

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jennifer Bradley entitled "(Re)imagining an urban identity : Knoxville and its 1982 International Energy Exposition." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Kathleen Brosnan, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Jennifer Bradley entitled "(Re) Imagining An Urban Identity: Knoxville and its 1982 International Energy Exposition. I have examined the final paper copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

Kathleen A Brosnan

Kathleen Brosnan, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Bruce Wheeler

Janis Appier

Janis Appier

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

(RE) IMAGINING AN URBAN IDENTITY: KNOXVILLE AND ITS 1982 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY EXPOSITION

A Thesis Presented for the Master's of Arts Degree

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jennifer Bradley

December 2003

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the changing perceptions of identity in relation to urbanity in Knoxville, Tennessee. The 1982 International Energy Exposition was the pivotal event in this study, a study that spanned roughly a century of Knoxville urbanization. This study was done through primary sources such as city plans, energy studies, and programs of city revitalization, restoration, and beautification. The primary sources used were then compared to traditional urban and environmental historiographies to establish a sense of where Knoxville fit in.

The research revealed that Knoxville mirrored much of Southern trends in urbanization until 1982. The 1982 World's Fair represented a turning point in Knoxville's urbanization, at least in its theory. By hosting the fair, Knoxvillians hoped to capitalize on the nascent environmental movement by commodifying energy and nature. A direct response to the oil crisis of the 1970s, not to mention the struggling economy, the energy theme of the fair was an attempt to alleviate the national energy situation, while gaining recognition (and federal dollars) for the city of Knoxville.

Much of the research centered upon the preceding planning of the fair, which revealed an intense conflict among the citizenry concerning the methods, motivations, and significance behind the fair. It is here that one sees two groups of elites battling over the future urban identity of their fair city. My study concluded that while the fair was a

practical failure, in that it accomplished few of the goals set out, it provided a startling glimpse into how urban identities are formed. In addition, the fair also disrupted the traditional pattern of city planning, and left in its wake privatized development. This legacy is still seen in the planning for the city of Knoxville for today.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"A lot of disbelief dies today with the birth of the first world's fair ever held in the Southeast--the 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee."[1]

The first of May heralded the opening of the 1982 International Energy Exposition. The exposition, the first of its kind in the southeastern United States, represented the fruition of the hopes of thousands of Knoxvillians. Conceived in 1974, the idea for the fair stemmed from success stories of similar events in Seattle and Spokane. The fairs seemed to revive the central business districts of these cities and to spark a new era of urban renewal for the fair sites and surrounding areas. In theory, the fair offered everything Knoxvillians desired: international recognition, urban renewal, improved highways, increased commerce and employment, and, most importantly, the opportunity to present a progressive new identity to a national audience.

Business on opening day fell within the projected range of eighty thousand to one hundred thousand. Even the weather, a mild seventy degrees, cooperated with the ambitions of the citizens of Knoxville. Fairgoers excitedly explored the Chinese pavilion, the amusement park rides, and the diverse range of eateries, among the many attractions that the fair offered. The rhetoric of harmony and unity, explicitly promoted by speakers such as Exposition chairman Jake Butcher, Mayor Randy Tyree, and President Ronald Reagan, espoused hope in a future of environmental sustainability and global

[1] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 2 May 1982.

cooperation. By all standards, the opening day portended success for the exposition and the city.[2]

Knoxville needed a success for a plethora of reasons. Some thirty-two million dollars of city funds were riding on this venture as Knoxville faced continuing urban decline. The fair was supposed to solve many problems. Knoxville had experienced increasing rates of suburbanization, severe racial and class stratification within city limits, and a slumping economy, trends that began in the 1920s and were well entrenched by the mid-1970s. Urban revitalization, a projected result of the Exposition, was to renew the central business district, spur urban growth, create more commerce and residency downtown, and in the end, render Knoxville the premier city of the South. Based on (somewhat inflated) stories of success in Seattle and Spokane, a fair seemed to offer a cure for these ills. Moreover, an international exposition presented a unique platform on which to create a new urban identity for the city of Knoxville.

This platform became the theme of the fair. All international expositions celebrated a theme, and Knoxville's promoters trusted that an appropriate and provocative one would open new avenues for their city. Given the growth of the environmental movement and the oil crisis that defined the 1970s, the organizers focused on energy. The promoters hoped that through this theme, Knoxville would emerge as a progressive, attractive, flourishing city and leave its dingy reputation in the past.

---

[2] United States Department of Commerce, *Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville Energy Exposition--Energy Expo '82--to the President of the United States* (Washington D.C.: 1982), 1-10.

In the preceding decades, many factors had contributed to Knoxville's less than progressive notoriety. Among them, Knoxville was a southern city. The concepts of the New South had improved the region's image, but few southern cities rivaled the metropolises of the Northeast, Midwest, and West. The South's distinct flavor remained colored by a history of Jim Crow segregation and retarded industrial development. Many prominent Knoxvillians wanted to escape such backward southern stereotypes. The theme of energy offered a chance to deliver Knoxville a new future. Promoters also focused on energy because of Knoxville's proximity to Oak Ridge National Atomic Laboratory (ORNL). The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the largest power company in the Southeast, called the city home. And the University of Tennessee (UT), with its main Knoxville campus holding more than twenty-thousand students, was a leading institution for scientific research in related fields. Partnerships with these facilities gave legitimacy to Knoxville's claim to be an energy center, while the nearness of the Great Smoky Mountain National Park offered a link to "nature" in this new era of environmental consciousness.

This particular vision was important. First, it allowed Knoxville to incorporate the more appealing aspects of such outlying areas into its own urban image. Knoxville had long competed with Oak Ridge for cultural and urban primacy in East Tennessee, and in recent decades had been fighting a losing battle. By hosting an energy-themed fair, Knoxville could claim, rhetorically, Oak Ridge's reputation as its own. The Great Smoky

Mountain National Park added another dimension. The city co-opted the park's image of protection and preservation and linked its urban environment with its "wilderness." As one of the country's largest power companies, TVA's activities were obviously associated with energy. However, by the 1970s, TVA's use of coal and nuclear power, the twin evils of energy, had damaged its reputation. TVA also relied on oil, and with the nationwide crisis, Americans had begun to question whether their dependence on foreign oil had created a threat to national security. By becoming the "green" city, Knoxville could dress itself and TVA in the cloth of environmentalism.

Progressive notions associated with environmentalism were the chief reason for choosing the fair's theme. By celebrating more efficient energy usage and its implied relationship to environmentalism, Knoxville hoped to revamp its urban image. A connection to the ideals of 1970s environmentalism would distinguish the town from its southern neighbors and every other city in the country. In the parlance of the exposition's rhetoric, Knoxville planned to lead the way in environmental sustainability.

With the opening of the fair, all these ambitions seemed possible. The fact that the little city of Knoxville had pulled it off in the first place seemed to be a good start. The fair appeared to be a success. In many ways, certain urban visions were realized initially. The Lower Second Creek, the fair site, was restored and redeveloped, at least temporarily. Programs of city beautification improved the visual landscape of downtown. International symposia on energy convened there in the foothills of the

Smokies. The city began planning for new energy source studies and new integrated community forums for energy. An International Energy Research Center was in the works, ensuring that Knoxville would remain at the forefront of energy technology once the Exposition closed. Residual development of the fair site promised increased commerce and upscale residency in the downtown district. Knoxville, it seemed, provided the new model for southern urban success, the embodiment of the modern, progressive city.

Yet, when the fair closed six months later on October 31, 1982, hopes of lasting urban greatness seemed to vanish with the tourists. The 1982 World's Fair ultimately failed at all but two goals. First, the "scruffy little city" had hosted a successful fair that drew over eleven million visitors.[3] Second, those visitors traveled to and from events on the new highways that looped the city. The remainder of the objectives never made it past the planning stage. Within fifteen years the Knoxville fair was chiefly remembered as the butt of a joke in a well-known episode of the animated television series, *The Simpsons*. What went wrong? *The Simpsons* simply and comedically captured the essence of the fair and its failure. In the episode, all that remains of the exposition is the Sunsphere, an empty relic of the grandiose and ultimately false promises made by the fair's promoters.[4]

With the same forethought that Bart Simpson and his friends demonstrate when they decide to go to Knoxville for spring break, a small group of "developer-bloc" citizens

[3] Ibid., 5.
[4] *The Simpsons*, Episode 720, archived at *http://www.thesimpsons.com/episode-guide/*.

had brought the fair to Knoxville. Dynamic and aggressive, these organizers were the chief force behind the fair. In fact, they may have been the only ones completely behind it. Backers such as Kyle Testerman, Randy Tyree, Jake Butcher, and Stewart Evans seemingly single-handedly made the fair a reality. T-shirts proclaimed that "the scruffy little city did it," but Knoxville had hardly embraced the fair. In fact, most members of the community were never consulted about it. Other leading community members such as councilwoman Bernice O'Connor and Professor Joe Dodd raised loud voices of dissent. The Knoxville City Council had considered a referendum in 1978 to assess community support for the fair, but a few connected members blocked the motion by labeling it un-American. While a few Knoxvillians hoped the fair portended a better future for their community, they never reached a consensus about the Exposition's vision nor the path upon which it placed the city.

The fair itself was not even formally endorsed by the citizens of Knoxville. The plans for post-fair residual development had no municipal complement; they lacked mechanisms for their implementation and enforcement. In addition, the temporary end to the oil crisis quickly undermined the importance of the energy theme in the 1980s and under the policies of the Reagan administration. Without an energy crisis most Knoxvillians, along with the rest of the nation, no longer felt compelled to create sustainable lifestyles nor a city that placed the environment ahead of economic issues. Finally, the inertia of the citizenry and the seeming enormity of the task of municipal

reform combined to stop Knoxvillians from making the urban vision of a few elites a reality. The World's Fair became a memory rather than a blueprint for the future.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NASCENT BEGINNINGS OF URBAN IDENTITY: THE COMING OF THE FAIR

Hosting a World's Fair was just the boost that Knoxville needed to keep it in pace with the times.[1]

The 1982 World's Fair in Knoxville stands out as a seeming aberration in the history of such expositions. A "scruffy little city," Knoxville seemed neither large enough, dynamic enough, nor progressive enough to host a world's fair. Yet Knoxville did. The Knoxville International Energy Exposition (KIEE) signified many things. Although the fair was a new idea, it represented a continuation of implementing short-term, nonsustainable solutions for long-standing urban maladies. Knoxville had a recent history of urban decline and suburban flight and an even longer tradition of unstable development that failed to address the totality of the city. Second, the solution the fair seemed to offer Knoxville suggested that the historical connotations of world's fairs and modernization still had meaning in contemporary society. Lastly, promoters of Knoxville's exposition grounded their hopes in misplaced urban theories that posited long-term revitalization followed short-term economic projects.

In the end, the 1982 Knoxville World's Fair symbolized the culmination of the

[1] United States Department of Commerce, Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition -- Energy Expo '82 -- to the President of the United States (Washington D.C.: 1982), 1.

city's century-long struggle for an urban identity. The close of the Civil War yielded, among other things, the idea of the New South. Its proponents urged an immediate shift toward greater urbanization, although support for this notion did not reach its peak until the 1930s. Some southern cities experienced growth, but the region still lagged behind others in industrialization, per capita income, and the sophisticated accouterments associated with large metropolises.[2] Some southerners hoped that the cultural and industrial differences between the North and South, still evident in the 1930s, were merely a result of time. An increasingly more expansive urbanization of the South, they believed, would close the gap. Urban leaders across the region contended that if cities built infrastructures, industry would follow. From these advancements, modernization would result, with all the cultural and social changes it implied.

This theory had at its heart the premise that centrality of cities in cultural and economic life was a nationally shared idea. While this shared concept of urbanity had definite characteristics, cities were not all alike. Models of urbanization distinguished between the eastern and western city, and until recently the southern model of urbanization fell under the paradigm of the Eastern/Northern model. Scholars of the late twentieth century, such as David R. Goldfield, contest this classification, arguing that the South constitutes a distinctive regional framework that takes into consideration factors such as "ruralism, race, and colonialism."[3] This framework sets the cities of the South

[2] David R. Goldfield, "The Urban South: A Regional Framework," The American Historical Review 86 (December 1981): 1009-1011.

[3] Ibid., 1011.

apart from both their eastern and western counterparts.

Historians such as Louis Wirth assert that the city is a separate entity, much removed from its rural counterpart. A city possesses the power to alter a way of life.[4] In keeping with traditional theory, this assertion rests on the foundation that urbanity represents a unique community—a community that exists across all regions. This tradition supports the theory that cities are first built, then inhabited and infused with life. This supposition removes agency from the diverse groups of peoples that truly create cities. This idea of city gives primacy to the superstructure of urbanization rather than to the actual agents of urbanity. While not necessarily erroneous, this tradition presents a rather lopsided view of urbanization.[5]

Goldfield's regional framework for the South does not consider the southern city to be part of such an urban community. Nor does Goldfield work with an assumption of a distinct line between the rural and the urban. Rather, Goldfield argues that in the South, the agency of urbanity was not so powerful. Instead of southern cities absorbing and effectively subduing notions, values, and traditions associated with ruralism, they repeatedly contended with them over time. Competing notions of tradition (rural) and modernity (urban) maintained equal primacy in the urban South. Goldfield argues for a separate framework because the "dissociation of city and region" is less apparent in the South than in other urban models.[6]

[4] Louis Wirth, cited in Goldfield, "The Urban South," 1010.
[5] Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Vintage, 1961), 3-25.
[6] Goldfield, "The Urban South," 1010.

Goldfield is certainly not the only one to stress the centrality of the relation between region and city. Few scholars see city and country as entirely dichotomous entities, but the interchange between urban and rural has been less distinct in southern towns. The South's tradition of agriculture, its economic dependence on northern industry, and its complicated racial past render the South as distinct a region as the North and the West.[7] This distinct past made the southern city unique.

Knoxville, Tennessee fits this pattern. The city grappled with its urban identity within this southern urban framework. Alternately proud and ashamed of their town's semi-urban status and Appalachian roots, Knoxvillians had a long, troubled romance with traditional views of urbanization. This past, plagued by fragmentation, dissent, and uncertainty, culminated in the hosting of the 1982 World's Fair. The Fair, and the decade leading up to it, were turning points in Knoxville's history of urbanization. A cyclic pattern of failed applications of traditional urban planning efforts and theory and periods of stagnation plagued the city. The World's Fair, one of the latest attempts at traditional modernization, was but one event in this pattern. The fair, although a new idea, was essentially an old solution.

The history of urbanization in Knoxville generally begins in the late nineteenth century. In the wake of the Civil War, the fever of the New South spread throughout the region. Knoxville was no exception. The modest town, which had undergone several

[7] Ibid., 1010-1034.

changes since its founding in 1791, started on the road to industrialization through its leading citizens. "A close-knit civic commercial elite" began to imagine a modern Knoxville that combined the area's abundant natural resources and an established rail system with outside capital (mostly from the North) and labor from outlying districts. This Appalachian hinterland teemed with a seemingly inexhaustible supply of workers to fuel the industrialization of Knoxville. These workers also infused Knoxville with rural values, traditions, and conservatism. According to Michael McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, the association with its Appalachian hinterland provided the aspects of ruralism and racism that are part of Goldfield's framework.[8]

For McDonald and Wheeler, "Appalachia" refers generally to "an environment that is premodern or transitional—an environment of rurality, strong kinship ties, community, low social mobility, resistance to change, self-awareness [of said characteristics], and deep personal religious conviction." This "premodern or transitional" element, present in many southern cities, was absorbed to a higher degree in Knoxville because urbanization remained a fragmented, unstable, incomplete process.[9] Thus the city lacked the necessary urbanity to dilute the Appalachian element. Essentially, Knoxville became urban, but not urban enough. Not only did the New South come to Appalachia, Appalachia came to the New South.[10] This feature of Knoxville

[8] Micheal J. McDonald and William Bruce Wheeler, Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 11.

[9] Ibid.

[10] C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913 (Louisiana: Louisiana University Press, 1951): 151.

defined its century-long struggle for modernization.

In the late nineteenth century, a new ruling constituency of middle-class businessmen who resembled urban societies of the East and West began to dominate Knoxville. Before the Civil War, Knoxville did not reflect common societal patterns of the South. However, postwar Knoxville's industrialization was similar to other southern attempts at the same. In order to attract northern capital, these businessmen suppressed dissenting groups such as the displaced aristocracy, blacks, and white yeomen; this suppression required tightly controlled planning.[11] Trading boards and industrial associations were set up, and northern dollars flowed in. This outside capital provided the economic dependence that Goldfield terms colonialism.[12] Population growth accompanied these investments. Coupled with the rail system and the ideologically homogeneous ruling elite, Knoxville was building an industrial basis for continued growth.

The type of migrants influenced the direction Knoxville pursued. To be sure, investors and merchants came to Knoxville, but the majority of the population influx consisted of newly-freed blacks and Appalachian whites. The new iron mills, coal companies, cloth mills, machine factories, marble companies, and furniture manufacturers required large numbers of primarily unskilled laborers. This industrial sector largely comprised what became known as the old downtown core along the river. Workers of all socioeconomic classes intermingled in the neighborhoods ringing the core.[13] These trends,

[11] McDonald and Wheeler, Knoxville, Tennessee, 16.
[12] Goldfield, "The Urban South," 1034.
[13] McDonald and Wheeler, Knoxville, Tennessee, 18-24.

coupled with the annexations of Mechanicsville and Fort Sanders, resulted in the rapid urbanization of the once sleepy little town. The booming industrialization meant many things to the emerging city. Knoxville's path to urbanization resulted in a surprisingly diverse downtown. Racially and economically heterogeneous neighborhoods sprung up overnight. Diversity proved a double-edged sword, resulting in both rapid adjustment to urban life and engendering a suspicion of it as well. Blacks and Appalachian whites made Knoxville their own. This new Knoxville meant different things for different people.

These demographic shifts affected more than the population and cultural landscape of Knoxville. The physical features of Knoxville rapidly changed as well. Factories brought dust, soot, and other forms of pollution that altered their immediate neighborhoods and more distant parts of Knoxville. The industry brought infrastructural improvements to its immediate vicinity, but these benefits did not reach the rest of the city. Paved roads outside of the immediate downtown area were scarce. Sewage systems were virtually nonexistent. Animals roamed dirt streets so unhygienic that they acted as conduits for disease. By 1920 the physical degradation of the city of Knoxville prompted the exodus of those who could afford to leave. This beginning of Knoxville's suburban sprawl undermined the growing urban diversity as well. Neighborhoods became economically and racially segregated, a trend that only intensified over the decades.[14]

The phenomenon of actually leaving the city they helped to create distanced local elites from the consequences of industrial growth in Knoxville as well. Short-term

[14] Ibid., 24-35.

solutions to industrial problems were favored over long-term ideas because of their immediate economic benefits and lower costs. Because those who fled were no longer part of the downtown, they no longer could see the advantages of permanently improving it. Gradually, the spirit and motivation that characterized Knoxville's initial growth spurt ground to a halt. As a result of neglect, the downtown neighborhoods and factories fell into greater disrepair, exacerbating the already tense atmosphere between the poor blacks and poor whites. In Knoxville, the boosterism of the New South proved merely rhetorical. By 1920, "physical grimness, economic slowdown, modest population growth, residential segregation by class, and race, the growing conservatism of a large segment of the elite, and racial problems together signaled that if the New South had arrived in Knoxville, the benefits it brought to the city clearly had been mixed." In addition to these problems, Knoxville's nascent city government did not have a clear role to play in addressing these ailments. Bitter political rifts forced those who might pose solutions to remain out of the line of fire. Conservative politics and an unwillingness to raise taxes for municipal spending caused Knoxville to become the most indebted city in Tennessee. This indebtedness compounded the already severe problems caused by ineffective urbanization.[15]

Although past its heyday, the City Beautiful movement still exerted a pull on city planning, influencing the image of the "city" in the American imagination. Physical revitalization, aesthetics, order, and harmony between nature and the city became the

[15] Ibid., 34-41, quotation on 41.

lasting legacies of the City Beautiful movement and seemed to provide remedies to some urban problems.[16] But such solutions were beyond Knoxville's already strained finances. Private developers remained unwilling to invest in the downtown area, due to the high risk of such ventures, but business boomed in the suburbs. This concentration of activity intensified the suburban flight and further condemned the downtown, home to poor whites and blacks. Poverty exacerbated antagonistic race relations in the densely populated downtown.[17] A seemingly progressive industrial city at the turn of the century, Knoxville continued a downward spiral of cultural fragmentation that lasted well into the 1940s. The city fell prey to the conservatism, colonialism, and racism embedded in Goldfield's southern urban framework. It took decades before any of these aspects could be completely overcome. Knoxville was not alone. At this time, other older industrial centers in the region experienced depopulation and economic stagnation. African-Americans fled to the North well into the 1970s, disrupting Knoxville's previous pattern of diversity. What little diversity still existed stayed in downtown.[18]

After World War II Knoxville shared in the national and southern trend of postwar prosperity, and even started minor movements towards urban revitalization. Interstate highway construction, the Knoxville Utilities Board, and an airport, appeared in this period. Superficially, "Knoxville [was] poised on the brink of a new era of

---

[16] William H. Wilson, The City Beautiful Movement (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989): 1-9.

[17] McDonald and Wheeler, Knoxville, Tennessee, 48.

[18] Ibid., 70-72.

development."[19] The reality was strikingly different. Textile industries declined, and newer industries could not replace their primacy. Furthermore, Knoxville's crumbling infrastructure, a feature since the beginning of its industrial movement, grew rapidly worse. By 1949 about 45 percent of downtown buildings either needed major repairs or faced condemnation. Municipal administrations saw no incentive to improve the old downtown, and this lack of improvement caused further suburban flight. The postwar political scene was no more prepared to deal with such a blighted industrial sector than before. To make matters worse, the prosperous, emerging town of Oak Ridge seemed ready to usurp Knoxville's place atop the urban hierarchy of East Tennessee. Unable to decide between resentment of Oak Ridge or co-opting its reputation, Knoxvillians remained wary of their atomic neighbor. This tumultuous state of affairs in Knoxville continued until the mid 1970s.[20]

In the 1960s, however, some sentiment toward urban revitalization had surfaced. For example, the Market Square development was a well-intentioned failure at reclaiming Knoxville's urban center. Market Square was redesigned to include more parking and to look more attractive in an effort to bring shoppers back to the downtown. Although the new square attracted some initial interest, downtown ultimately could not compete with the space and variety that suburban shopping plazas offered. Attempts such as Market Square, although they did help to beautify the downtown to a degree, did

[19] Ibid., 72.
[20] Ibid.

nothing to stop the economic decline of the area. These initial attempts foreshadowed a flurry of ideas in the 1970s and 1980s from new political blood. "Developer-bloc" politicians such as Kyle Testerman and Randy Tyree determined to drag Knoxville into twentieth-century modernization kicking and screaming if they had to. Stubbornly ignoring the traditional conservative powers, these new politicians and civic leaders "saw their task as nothing less than bold planning for area growth and massive renovation of downtown." Aided by the Butcher brothers and the Lawler developers, these men sought to change Knoxville. This new civic spirit, coupled with a growing university population and hopes for increases in industry, yielded ideas such as Expo '82.[21]

For the new power brokers, Expo '82 was an important step in addressing Knoxville's long-entrenched problems. Although Expo '82 was a new idea for Knoxville, it was an historically old solution. World expositions had served as catalysts for urbanization in other cities. However, Expo '82 proved to be no more lasting than any earlier revitalization efforts in Knoxville. In the end, the fair launched a new and equally misplaced preoccupation with satellite zones and selective renewal.

On September 30, 1974, W. Stewart Evans, the president of the Downtown Knoxville Association, attended an international conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma and heard a favorable report about Expo '74, the World's Fair held in Spokane, Washington. Within a month, he presented his idea to hold one in Knoxville to the Downtown Knoxville

[21] Ibid., 119-168, quotation on 119.

Association, a group of leading members of the business community. In less than a year, Mayor Kyle Testerman appointed an advisory committee. A year later, the committee chose the fair site. Eleven developers incorporated the Knoxville International Energy Exposition Corporation and began raising funds for the appropriation of the site.[22]

Why did an idea like an international exposition take hold among the new Knoxville visionaries? There were many reasons. Recent fairs such as those in Spokane and Seattle yielded seemingly positive results. Seattle and Spokane's promoters boasted of the urban and economic growth that resulted from their expositions. Historically, fairs placed a spotlight on America and its larger cities -- St. Louis, Chicago, New York-- for the rest of the world. A world's fair in Knoxville seemingly promised similar results. Also, an international theme of environmentalism for the fair could reverse what had formerly been seen as some of Knoxville's problems. In the ideology of the fair's planners, competing areas such as the Smoky Mountains and Oak Ridge would be intellectually annexed to Knoxville. TVA could be redressed in the clothes of environmentalism by emphasizing energy over pollution.

Merle Curti points out that American world fair participation was fueled chiefly by the desires to expand American "patriotism and enterprise." Past motives for American participation in overseas fairs and for hosting fairs on American soil were to exhibit the nation's resources, industrial prowess, social values and institutions, and

[22] United States Department of Commerce, Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition -- Energy Expo '82 -- to the President of the United States (Washington D.C.: 1982), 1.

economic largess and to dispel notions of American inferiority. International expositions were "good advertising to attract European skilled immigrants and capital, to increase American exports, to publicize American institutions, and enhance American prestige." Desires for global harmony and a diffusion of technology permeated later fairs. Knoxville promoters' reasoning for hosting a fair was well-informed by this tradition.[23]

More recent fairs also established specific examples for Knoxville's undertaking. The Seattle and Spokane fairs, along with the San Antonio exposition, most closely resembled Knoxville's effort. It could hardly be otherwise; after all, how could Knoxville's Expo rival those of established urban centers such as Chicago or New York? Seattle's Century 21 Exposition of 1962 had begun a shift toward smaller exhibitions for world's fairs. Designed to showcase local and regional distinctions, these expositions promoted these cities nationally and internationally and often resulted in the bonus of urban renewal. Seattle's fair celebrated achievements in science and space and projected life in the twenty-first century city. The exposition was a local event, but it included national and international messages concerning the atomic and space ages, global harmony, and even a lessening of Cold War tensions that highlighted Seattle as an emerging western metropolis.[24] The fair established Seattle as a new breed of a western city where topography and isolation still yielded an urban center. Seattle's World's Fair attempted

[23] Merle Curti, "America at the World fairs, 1851-1893," The American Historical Review 55 (July 1950): 833-836, quotations on 833 and 836, respectively.

[24] John M. Findlay, Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 214-216.

to bring the economic focus back to the city center. The central city was revitalized and enlarged, in effect bringing suburbanites back to the core. Other benefits of the fair included the completion of a mass-transit monorail, increased pedestrian access, and downtown beautification. Spokane's 1974 fair was similar to the Seattle experience. Its organizers developed a theme that addressed the endangered environment. A successful springboard for urban renewal, this fair ignited similar hopes for Knoxville.[25]

Knoxville's decision to host a world's fair is easily divined from these examples. On a smaller scale, Knoxvillians brought very similar motivations to their exposition. They hoped to attract outside capital and dispel local and national notions of the city's inferiority. Also the fair provided Knoxville with the opportunity to unite with Oak Ridge and the Smoky Mountains in creating a regional identity. By using the theme of energy, a theme that hid behind assumed connections with environmentalism and conservation, Knoxville could display to the world that it was urbane and progressive. Promoters hoped to suggest that Knoxville was more connected with the conservation of energy than the pollution of its production and expenditure, allowing the city and it citizens to seem concerned about the earth. The fair, they believed, would generate fifty years of progress in five years.[26]

The propaganda made the fair seem like an attractive option. Promoters promised everything; the exposition was the solution for all of Knoxville's ills. Second

[25] Ibid., 214-255.

[26] Joe Dodd, Expose: The Real Story Behind the Knoxville's World's Fair (Knoxville: Joe Dodd, 1982), 1.

Creek, a deteriorated and stagnant area between the university and downtown, was to be restored and enlarged.[27] The fair would eliminate "visual blight and deteriorating structures…while providing…a major city park, a permanent Energy Research Center, new housing, industrial sites, and a cross-town transit system."[28] Supporters touted the revitalization of Fort Sanders, a neighborhood adjacent to the fair site. Another lure was an increase in tourism to Knoxville that promised to last beyond 1982.[29]

As early as November 1976, the Knoxville International Energy Exposition Corporation outlined its main objectives. Drawn from local businessmen and developers, its members included Jake Butcher, a banker, Rodney Lawler, a contractor, and James Haslam II, president of Pilot Oil Company.[30] At the top of their list were improved highways to facilitate fair accessibility and downtown access afterward. They also called for urban integration—uniting the downtown, Second Creek, Fort Sanders, and university districts. Integration would involve creating green areas that linked the city center and these other areas. A major tenet of the promoters' plan was the creation of permanent structures reserved for city use after the fair that would attract patrons to the revitalized downtown district. Lastly, beautification and increased downtown parking were promised results of the fair.[31] The fair as the catalyst of urban renewal became the banner

---

[27] The Knoxville Journal, 22 March 1977.

[28] U.S. Department of Commerce, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Knoxville International Energy Exposition (Spokane, Washington, 1976):i.

[29] The Knoxville Journal,17 October 1978; 27 April 1977.

[30] U.S. Department of Commerce, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Knoxville International Energy Exposition (Spokane, Washington, 1976): 11.

[31] Ibid., 7; Knoxville News-Sentinel, 10 November 1976.

of its supporters. A "vehicle for honest-to-goodness rehabilitation," the exposition would make Knoxville a "real" city with a developed downtown, a thriving economy, and an urbane image.[32] In surveys taken in 1980, Knoxvillians simply parroted the fair promoters. When graduate student Oliver Thomas Massey, Jr surveyed citizens about what was important, their answers invariably included, "improved community spirit, downtown revitalization, more and better jobs, recognition of the town, improved mass transit, increased business, more public entertainment, increased tourism, and increased land values."[33] How could Knoxville's residents resist such promises? "Soon [Knoxville] would be a city with super services, an expanded tax base, a united and wealthy people, and worldwide recognition as the energy capital of the world."[34] With such endorsements, the fair seemed attractive indeed.

In addition, the fair's energy theme made Knoxville an environmental city, one concerned with the international context of the environmental crisis. The environmental movement had taken on a sense of urgency, in part, as a result of the 1970s oil crisis. This fair, with its emphasis on environmental technology and global harmony, would dispel the notion that Knoxville was simply a "scruffy little city." Obviously, the hopes of Knoxvillians differed little from those who had hosted earlier fairs. The International

---

[32] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 29 May 1977.

[33] Oliver Thomas Massey, "An Application of Diffusion of Innovation Theory in the Analysis of Attitudes Toward the 1982 World's Energy Exposition" (Ph.D. diss., University of tennessee, 1982), 82. Also see Gregory J. Meissen, "A Differential Analysis of the Perceived Social Impact of a World's Exposition" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1980), 77.

[34] Joe Dodd, World Class Politics: Knoxville's 1982 World's Fair Redevelopment and Political Process (Salem: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1988), 115.

Energy Exposition of 1982 was simply a bid to show the world a better city. Knoxville's success would also be the South's triumph, as the exposition dispelled stereotypes of it own dinginess in particular and southern backwardness in general. Knoxville would emerge as the urban leader of the South.

The theme of energy provided a platform for the fair and allowed Knoxville to capitalize on the achievements of its neighbors. Associations with TVA and ORNL shifted from energy use to energy technology and conservation. In addition, Knoxville's proximity to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park also connected the city to a provocative natural image. By implication, boosters tied energy and nature with environmentalism. This implication allowed Knoxville to present itself as a progressive city as well as the one that was protective of its surrounding beautiful environment.

The environmental movement of the 1970s had its roots in the politics of the 1960s when greater affluence allowed Americans to ponder air and water quality and to support the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.[35] The oil crisis of the 1970s alerted Americans that their wasteful habits had created a dependence on foreign oil.[36] By the 1970s, environmentalism had become a household word, if not a household practice. President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration had begun to address urban environmental concerns in programs such as Ladybird Johnson's "Keep America

[35] Hal K. Rothman, The Greening of A Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945 (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998), 115.

[36] New York Times, 2 May 1982.

Beautiful" campaigns and the city beautification project for Washington, D.C.[37] Environmentalists had moved beyond concerns for the wilderness to take on the city. Martin V. Melosi explains that in the 1970s the "natural environment and the built environment were being fused in the national consciousness, possibly for the first time."[38]

The growing prominence of environmentalism in the national consciousness fit the progression of fair themes, from science and space in Seattle, to the endangered environment of Spokane, to "energy turns the world" in Knoxville. Promoters considered Knoxville a "primary U.S. energy center."[39] Promoters argued that because of the university, the presence of TVA, and Knoxville's proximity to the Great Smoky Mountains Park and Oak Ridge, the city was a natural choice for such a fair.

The theme -- energy turns the world -- presented a variety of options about the meaning and application of energy. The exposition was an opportunity to offer an environmental ethic to the citizens of the world.[40] Explaining how energy was used and how it could be used better became a major objective.[41] The fair would show the shocking state of energy waste worldwide and provide alternative solutions to those

---

[37] Rothman, The Greening of a Nation?, 96-98.

[38] Martin V. Melosi, Effluent America: Cities, Industry, and the Environment (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 254-257.

[39] United States Department of Commerce, Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition -- Energy Expo '82 -- to the President of the United States (Washington D.C.: 1982), 3;5.

[40] United States Department of Commerce, Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Knoxville International Energy Exposition (Spokane, Washington, 1976): 17.

[41] United States Department of Commerce, Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition -- Energy Expo '82 -- to the President of the United States (Washington D.C.: 1982), 3.

problems. Future technology would dominate the exhibits.[42] These solutions would insure that fairgoers left with a sense of hope.[43] Promoters also planned to celebrate the creative energy of people, especially the energy of Knoxvillians.[44] In addition to the Exposition, the city of Knoxville would become greener through a complex plan of city landscaping.[45]

The notion that Knoxville would strive for urban sustainability, although relevant to its time and place, was not entirely plausible. Knoxville was an energy capital, but local entities such as TVA focused more on production at any cost than conservation practices. In reality, the fair addressed some aspects of environmentalism, such as the pursuit for alternative fuel sources, but the vague theme of energy attached itself to the coattails of environmentalism and mistaken assumptions about Knoxville's progressiveness.

The propaganda of the fair projected assurance and organization, but the reality was less certain. Community support was neither widespread nor deep. The fair happened in large part due to the sheer will of a few community leaders, such as Butcher, Roberts, Testerman, and others. This will, sadly, was only manifested by key members on either side of the fair debate. Initially, they argued, the fair would cost the citizens of Knoxville nothing. They maintained this assurance until shortly after the fair

[42] Economics Research Corporation, Economic Feasibility of Energy Expo '82 (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1978), 1-11.

[43] United States Department of Commerce, Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Spokane, Washington, 1977), 13.

[44] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 29 April 1977.

[45] Ibid., 4 May 1977.

closed. In pre-fair rhetoric, details about funding, redevelopment, and the environmental consequences of new development lacked specificity. For example, comments to the Environmental Impact Statement revealed that a great deal of construction and site planning left many questions unanswered. Other points of contention, explained more thoroughly in chapter two, included concerns about parking, housing and relocation and questions alluding to the true beneficiaries of the fair. The dissenters were convinced that the fair would only intensify the city's existing maladies. Both sides worried about rebuilding, revitalizing, and renewing the downtown core. They simply did not agree on how these goals should be achieved.

Poor planning became the springboard for dissension. The cavalier manner in which the fair was approved, planned, and even executed spurred many citizens to take action. Most citizens felt left out of the fair's planning process. After the DKA proposed the initial idea in 1974, Mayor Testerman appointed an advisory committee to study the fair's feasibility, but what was to be a study became reality, and by 1975 a both a theme and a site had been proposed. Immediately thereafter, the advisory committee incorporated into the KIEE and began raising funds for the venture. KIEE projected expenses of $11.6 million dollars. Approval came in 1976, largely due to the timely nature of the theme. After the Bureau of International Exposition approved the venue, the federal government pledged $20.6 million to build the U.S. Pavilion. The city provided $11.6 million, from loans and pledges, to match federal funding. The state

contributed $3 million, to supplement $12.5 million of federal funds allocated for interstate construction. This left more than $60 million to be picked up locally. The budget had swelled considerably. Shut out of a referendum, citizens were forced to pay for a venture that had been masterminded by just a few.[46]

Funding garnered criticism concerning the ultimate benefits of the fair. Many feared that the fair, paid for by many, would benefit only a few--Jake and C.H. Butcher, the chief financiers for the fair, and their associates, former mayor Kyle Testerman and current mayor Randy Tyree, who took office in 1980. Indeed, the politics that secured the approval and funding of the fair were sordid at best. The Butcher brothers stood to gain the most through rising property values and interest rates. According to fair rhetoric, the exposition was a not-for-profit venture. Be that as it may, a great deal of downtown properties were owned by KIEE members. In addition, various downtown firms, such as Rodney Lawler's development and contracting company, and the Butcher Brothers' banks stood to gain from opportunities presented in the course of the fair's financing and construction. Critics alleged that promoters generally, and the Butcher brothers specifically, were "raiding the treasury."[47] National coverage from the *Reader's Digest*, the *New York Times,* and other publications was generally unfavorable. The *Reader's Digest* averred that the Expo was "born of sordid politics at the highest levels...this

[46] United States Department of Commerce, Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition -- Energy Expo '82 -- to the President of the United States (Washington D.C., 1982): 10.

[47] Kenneth Y. Tomlinson, "The Shocking Saga of Expo '82," Reader's Digest 691 (November 1979): 170.

project is a gross example of the kind of pork-barrel spending the president promised to abolish.'"[48] As late as 1981, long after construction had begun, the *New York Times* expressed doubts that Knoxville could pull off the fair.[49] While such articles confirmed the opposition's worst fears, supporters perceived them as merely ignorant slurs that motivated them to complete the fair as promised.

Initially, $11.6 million was the cost for the fair. This money, taken from city funds, complemented a $20.6 million pledged by the federal government. However, promoters initially claimed no city funding was necessary. Knoxville's rising debt had reached its saturation point years before; Tyree and other city leaders approved more only because they assumed that future profits would cover all of Knoxville's debt.[50]

The allocation of city funds sparked a dissenting movement for a referendum regarding Expo '82 in 1977. Led by community groups, such as the Knoxville Area Urban League, and citizens, such as Professor Joe Dodd and City Councilwoman Bernice O' Connor, the referendum was designed to gauge how much actual support the fair enjoyed from the community. Because of the vagueness surrounding the costs and the beneficiaries of the fair, the referendum was seen as a corrective to both the hype and the promoters of the fair. The explanations about funding remained unclear, particularly when another $25 million was borrowed, by the city, from local banks, and never really

[48] Ibid., 169.
[49] New York Times, 30 May 1981.
[50] The Knoxville Journal, 18 October 1978.

explained to the public who would be repaid.[51] Allegations sprung up concerning another $10 million that were supposedly secretly pledged by Mayor Randy Tyree and not disclosed.[52] Rumors like these, regardless of their validity, caused alarm among many of the city's citizens about false publicity and the mishandling of public funds. Citing examples such as Spokane's success and speculating on the revenues of the fair, Knoxville's promoters promised large-scale benefits of economic activity and urban redevelopment, but they never committed to concrete redevelopment plans for post-fair Knoxville, and rarely informed the public about the true financial nature of their undertaking.[53] The referendum was pushed to alleviate these problems but was blocked by key members of the City Council and KIEE, such as Rodney Lawler. In the end, the referendum was struck down on the basis of its "un-American" nature.[54]

Sloppy handling of public information led to the formation of a small, but extremely vocal group of citizens who vehemently opposed the fair. The dissenters did their homework. Joe Dodd, a political science professor at the University of Tennessee, and Bernice O'Connor, a city councilwoman, organized most of the local opposition.[55] Publications, such as the Knoxville Area Urban League's "An Assessment of Socio-Economic Problems Likely to Result From the Proposed Knoxville International Energy Exposition," intelligently probed the planning's inconsistencies and failings, but to no

[51] Ibid., 17 October 1978.
[52] Ibid., 4 October 1978.
[53] Ibid., 22 March 1977.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 17 October 1978; 18 October 1978.

avail. The Urban League challenged the long-term effects of the construction, the methods of revitalization, and the plan for a rebuilt watershed. The work also pointed out that the alleged benefits were speculative in nature and poorly researched. Moreover, the study questioned the efficacy of a plan that did not involve the input of the citizenry. The work also addressed glaring errors present in the EIS.[56] These and other criticisms were never really addressed by the fair's advisory board, because it was not required to do so under the law.[57]

Clearly, it is easy to see, from both sides of the fair debate that essentially two groups of elites were clashing concerning the future of their community. Though polled citizens certainly supported growth and its attendant positives, the mass citizenry of Knoxville were left entirely out of the process. Educated and well placed citizens such as Joe Dodd and Councilwoman Bernice O'Connor led the opposition against the other elite faction, the developer-bloc group. The developer-bloc men prevailed.

The striking down of the referendum, completely overriding the concerns of opposed citizens was essentially the end to any effective opposition.[58] Opposing views still rang out at city council meetings and in editorial pages, but critics could not stop the fair. In the end, nothing could stop the fair.

---

[56] Knoxville Area Urban League, "An Assessment of Socio-Economic Problems Likely to Result from the Proposed Knoxville International Energy Exposition," (Knoxville, Tennessee, 1977): 1-4.

[57] United States Department of Commerce, Comments and Responses to the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Spokane, Washington, 1979).

[58] The Knoxville Journal, 22 March 1977.

CHAPTER TWO

A LACK OF WILL: KNOXVILLE, ENERGY, AND DEVELOPMENT

"We realized that energy would be the most important subject that anybody could discussed at any time, at any place for the rest of the century."[1]

In 1973, OPEC's oil embargo precipitated a crisis in the United States and raised a new awareness of energy issues. Americans realized that reliance on foreign resources constituted an unstable dependency at best and posed a danger to the American way of life at worst. In 1979, President Jimmy Carter asserted, in an address to the nation on energy, that the crisis had eroded Americans' confidence in their future and undermined the "social and political fabric of America."[2] The crisis had indeed changed the way Americans perceived energy and its place in their future. This connection was no longer positive. Before the 1970s, most Americans had enjoyed the seemingly infinite abundance afforded by the the American landscape. A new consciousness now recognized the finite nature of energy resources and raised the issue of sustainability. Dependence on foreign oil was not the only issue. People recognized that energy was connected to population growth, economic viability, and the balance of political power

---

[1]Spoken by Stewart Evans, president of Downtown Knoxville Association. Department of Commerce, Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition—Energy Expo '82—to the President of the United States (Washington D.C., 1982): 9.

[2] President James Earl Carter, "Address to the Nation on Energy and National Goals," July 15, 1979, quoted in Jeanne Nienaber Clarke and Hanna J. Cortner, eds., The State and Nature: Voices Heard, Voices Unheard in America's Environmental Dialogue (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 286.

within the global community.

Traditionally Americans had turned to technology to resolve such crises. While faith in technical solutions continued, environmentalists asked their fellow citizens to consider conservation and alternative fuels as part of this new energy consciousness. A maturing American environmentalism had moved beyond wilderness preservation in national parks to focus on concerns such as resource depletion, pollution, the dangers of nuclear power, and strategies to combat these and other problems at the state and federal levels.[3]

The American experience with energy prior to the oil crisis of 1973 involved a "single-source mentality" connected to a sense of time value. Americans preferred energy sources and methods that appeared to save time and money. Over the decades, reliance on a single source came under this sense of value and time. It was easier and less expensive to develop utilities that generally relied on one source of energy-- oil. A mythic past suggested bountiful, seemingly inexhaustible resources, and the relationship between single-source energy consumption and economic growth became a lasting legacy. The crisis, coupled with the nation's growing environmental awareness, illustrated that energy was itself an extension of nature. In dealing with energy, one dealt with nature itself. The relationship was a reciprocal one. Environment determined energy usage, and energy usage affected the environment.[4]

---

[3] James C. Williams, Energy and the Making of Modern California (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1997), 1.

[4] Ibid., 2-4.

In addition to the maturation of the environmental movement and the oil crisis of the 1970s, an emerging trend that saw urban space as an environment meriting protection pushed concepts and strategies beyond the older rhetoric of wilderness preservation. In the past, Americans had viewed urbanity as the antithesis of nature. Such ideas permeated Progressive-era conservation policies, for example. By the 1960s, modern urban studies and changing environmental attitudes increasingly rejected such ideas in an effort to better understand the "nature" of urban environments and to remove the numerous ills that plagued them. After all the United States was, and had been since the 1920s, a predominantly urban nation. In the 1960s and 1970s, many environmentalists pursued new aims with new methods. With respect to cities, they hoped to limit growth, remove inefficiencies in utilities, repair the infrastructure, clean the air and water, and create permanent governmental apparatuses for dealing with such problems. This multifaceted environmental movement, primarily made up of middle-class citizens, led to federal and state regulations regarding air and water quality.[5] The perception of urban space as an environment and connections between the environment and nature meant that environmentalists need to reconsider cities.[6] "Environmental problem solving-- usually involving technological development, policy, and implementation," and new ideas of what

[5] Samuel P. Hays, Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 1-5; Eric H. Monkonnen, America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1-9.; and Rothman, The Greening of America?, 2-3.

[6] President Carter, quoted in Jeanne Nienaber Clarke and Hanna J. Cortner, eds., The State and Nature, 1.

constituted the environment shaped the way Americans perceived energy.[7] The old perspective that linked energy and economics still lingered, but now the environment was irrevocably connected to the equation.

Around this time, citizens of Knoxville, Tennessee began to reexplore their city's role in the national and international communities. Feeling the effects of industrial decline, suburban flight, and downtown deterioration, Knoxvillians sought a new urban identity amidst the national oil crisis and soon emphasized two potentially interrelated solutions: a world's fair with a theme of energy and environmentalism. These ideas would mark Knoxville as one of the most progressive cities in the nation. Although seemingly born of the oil crisis, this notion also had antecedents in the optimism of postwar America. The "sense that all problems could be solved by the application of money and ingenuity and its fervent belief that individuals and their desires could make a difference in a technological society."[8] And Knoxville was not unique in its new vision. Out of necessity, California had shifted to a new energy policy. California's "rediscovery of solar energy, wind power, minihydro, biomass energy, and cogenerated energy" became a model for the rest of America.[9] California's mixed use of resources seemed to suggest that finances, innovation, and motivation could solve energy and environmental problems, albeit perhaps temporarily. Traveling the same road, Knoxville

[7] Joel A. Tarr, The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective (Akron: University of Akron Press, 1998), 1.

[8] Rothman, The Greening of America?, 3.

[9] Williams, Energy and the Making of Modern California, 11. Recent energy crises suggest, however, that California has yet to resolve all issues in this area. For example, see Los Angeles Times, 9 April 2003.

explored alternate visions of itself in the 1970s and 1980s by developing the rarely explored connections between urban renewal, environmental concerns, and energy.

In addition to the national concerns with environment and energy, Knoxvillians had other reasons to present their city as a natural choice for a seat of energy development. Knoxville lies at the center of a region that boasts the largest national park (the Great Smoky Mountains National Park), the largest power supplier in the southeastern United States (TVA), a major research institution (the University of Tennessee), and a government-funded research community associated with atomic power (ORNL). Its location gave the claim that Knoxville was an energy center some credibility. And initially, it seemed enough for some Knoxvillians to posit their community as an energy center merely because it was a seat for the production of energy. It also seemed reasonable to co-opt the environmental movement by simply implying shared sentiments and emphasizing the city's proximity to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. These manipulations and assertions were enough to carry Knoxvillians to the idea of the Expo itself, but additional work was needed to legitimate the claim. Citizens' committees, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, state and federal agencies, including the Energy Department, and the local media performed these other tasks.

The media, primarily the newspapers, created the least accurate, but the most accessible basis for legitimation. Associating energy usage and technology with the environment and treating the city as natural space, the media made "energy" a household

word around Knoxville and gave it fresh definitions. These new meanings tended to be narrow and limiting, but nevertheless prompted more Knoxvillians than ever before to think about their environment in a variety of circumstances. Upon the Bureau of International Expositions' approval of the KIEE proposal, Tennessee Senator James Sasser commented in the *Knoxville News-Sentinel* that

> Knoxville and Tennessee is a natural setting for an international exposition. It is the home of TVA, the greatest public power project in the world, and people have been visiting it for years. Oak Ridge is right down the road, and we are looking to it to solve our energy problems. If the exposition is accepted by the people of Knoxville, it will be a great economic boost for all of East Tennessee and a great leap forward for Knoxville.[10]

The U.S. Department of Commerce echoed this sentiment, stating how economically positive the fair would be for Knoxvillians and how Knoxville would gain "prominence and recognition for its energy related facilities."[11] The media tied the environment, energy, and economics together rhetorically; Expo '82, its promoters hoped, would give those ties physical reality.

Propaganda concerning the fair moved beyond simply asserting that the exposition would "help dispel the darkness surrounding the energy crisis."[12] Local participants planned to use research and education to shine a new light. The fair provided a "setting in which to explore new technologies to conserve energy, to harness the long-lasting and most renewable resources, and to carry on the search for new resources."[13] Yet the fair's message was rarely any clearer than that. Occasionally, concrete examples seeped into

[10] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 27 April 1977.
[11] Ibid.
[12] New York Times, 10 June 1982.
[13] New York Times, 15 February 1981.

the press coverage, but information on fusion at ORNL, coal-gasification at TVA, the innovative new Zoological Park Reptile House, or the University's solar energy studies rarely involved any integration into fair activities.[14] The U.S. exhibit became a compromise between Jimmy Carter's preference for efficiency, conservation, and solar energy and Ronald Reagan's predilection for all things nuclear. Thus, the confusion in Knoxville's exposition mirrored the mixed messages in federal programs concerning energy.[15]

The propaganda for the fair also yielded varied definitions of the terms "environment" and "energy." Environment came to mean a better physical space, while retaining its more mainstream "green" associations. Because of such associations, the beautification of downtown Knoxville became an avenue to environmentalism.[16] Environment also referred to "green" policies: conservation, preservation, protection, restoration, renewal, degradation, decline, and citizen initiative. Others associated environment with the natural resources that provided energy and supported the economy.[17] The main definition of energy still revolved around fuel, but the media also celebrated the enthusiasm of the citizenry as perhaps Knoxville's most valuable energy source. Buzzwords for the fair implied a focus on conservation and energy alternatives

[14] Betsey B. Creekmore, Knoxville--Our Fair City (Knoxville: Greater Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, 1984), 36-37.

[15] New York Times, 2 May 1982.

[16] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 4 May, 1977.

[17] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 29 April, 1977.

for the sake of people and the environment.[18] International symposia preceded the fair and emphasized energy's connection to economics, politics, and global balances of power. Symposia participants explored alternative energy sources and the effects of new technology on underdeveloped nations.[19] The fair promoters themselves offered yet another perspective on energy. By focusing on the history and the future of energy in American development, they avoided the unresolved tensions of the contemporary crises.[20]

Critics challenged the fair's rhetoric through the local media. At a University of Tennessee function, U.S. Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut argued that the city had no business sponsoring such an exposition until Knoxvillians made good on their ideas by adopting at least a basic energy policy. Weicker asserted that such a policy should include plans for conservation, recycling, and a revamped public transportation system.[21] The Knoxville Area Urban League (KAUL) questioned whether the effects of the fair could be so one-sidedly positive. Rapid growth, KAUL added, was not progress unless it addressed long-term sustainability.[22] Comments to the EIS pointed out shortcomings in both the short-term and long-term projected effects and attested to the unrealistic

[18] United States Travel Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Haworth: 1976), i.

[19] Knoxville News-Sentinel 29 April, 1977.

[20] United States Travel Service of the Department of Commerce, Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Haworth: 1979), 13.

[21] Knoxville Journal, 18 October 1979.

[22] Knoxville Area Urban League, An Assessment of Socioeconomic Problems Likely to Result From the Proposed Knoxville International Energy Exposition (KAUL: 1977), 1-4.

nature and general inadequacy of the study.[23] Bob Allen, on behalf of the Harvey Broome Group of the Sierra Club, voiced concern that the EIS did not address the problems of a "crash program," which is what he termed the rapid growth of the fair site. Allen pointed out that all air quality data suggested a "planned violation of Federal Air Quality Standards."[24] Bruce A. Halston, a UT geography professor, noted that the U.S. Pavilion was essentially an "open ended box, in which air pollution could enter from the north and be trapped by the valley and the pavilion."[25] In the comments to the EIS and the local newspapers, Professor Joe Dodd criticized the rapidity of fair development, and questioned the plans for redevelopment.[26] To these groups and individuals, the rhetoric and convoluted definitions did not wash. The dissenters had perceived a significant problem: such sloppy planning and the ambiguity surrounding the residual development of the site led to a lack of will on all sides. Defeated, the dissenters could not stop the fair, nor could they control its impact. The plans revealed a lack of realism, which in turn contributed to the lack of will. The promoters were not going beyond the rhetoric or the surface of the fair and its theme. This lack of will, concerning the environment, the fair, and the future of the community figured into the fair's ultimate failure in accomplishing the promoter's goals.

A great deal of Expo rhetoric was exactly that, simply rhetoric, but there were

[23] United States Travel Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Comments and Responses to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Haworth: 1979), 5-11, 14-50.

[24] Ibid., 6.

[25] Ibid., 9.

[26] Ibid., 17-36; Joe Dodd, Expose: the Real Story Behind the Knoxville World's Fair (Knoxville: Joe Dodd, 1982), 2.

behind-the-scenes attempts by numerous citizens and groups to make Knoxville's new vision(s) real. Some of these attempts even predated fair planning. These explorations followed in the footsteps of seemingly more progressive locations, such as the state of California and the city of Portland, Oregon. The explorations reflected optimism, hope, and drive. Planned visions of Knoxville drew on the connections between energy, environment, and hopes for urban revitalization. In fact, new planners contrived to revitalize downtown Knoxville through the commodification of energy itself.

As early as 1970, private citizens had articulated goals for downtown renewal and development. The Program for Community Improvement (PCI), for example, argued "that the haphazard methods of the past be abandoned in favor of a logical and coordinated plan of action based upon total community needs."[27] The program recognized that urban revitalization encompassed more than just downtown development; the study intended to spur social and economic action as well. The people involved with this study, private citizens generally residing in urbanized sectors, understood that the urban space was an environment. PCI viewed the city as habitat and strove to integrate commerce with residences and people with development. These plans offered a panacea for a declining industrial and commercial downtown. The main focus of the two-and-a-half year study was to eliminate and prevent slums, deterioration, and urban blight. Another goal was to bring residential life back to the central business district.

[27] Program for Community Improvement, Initial Program for Community Improvement: 1970-1976 (Knoxville: 1970), 1.

Commerce, the report concluded, could not revive downtown alone; at the time, it was a place to work and little else. More diversified activities were needed.[28] Moreover, because the PCI plan for renewal depended upon federal dollars and because the Department of Housing and Urban Development stipulated that fifty percent of any funded project be committed to housing for low and moderate income families, its promoters could not concentrate on predominantly industrial or commercial zones.[29] Finally, the PCI's plan called for mixed usage, an idea consistent with the planning recommendations espoused by the noted urban commentator Jane Jacobs.[30] Fort Sanders, Mechanicsville, and Old North Knoxville became top priorities because of their central locations and mixed-use potential.[31]

In addition to specific plans for various neighborhoods in the central Knoxville district that would be governed by municipal zoning laws, the PCI also called for public action and created a list of priorities and recommendations for the city and its citizens. Because of a shortage of housing for the elderly, the program members felt that the Knoxville Housing Authority should immediately apply for federal funding for three hundred units that provided the means for home ownership. Another proposal suggested training programs to teach tenants how to repair and maintain their residences. The committee felt instilling pride of ownership in public housing tenants would reap larger civic benefits, such as private rehabilitation. Cooperation between developers and

[28] Ibid., 1-3
[29] Ibid., 4.
[30] Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 3-25.
[31] Program for Community Improvement, Initial Program for Community Improvement, 4-12.

government was another strategy. Government funding was available for both public and private restoration of historically zoned neighborhoods such as Mechanicsville and Fort Sanders. Rehabilitation, defined by the PCI as the physical renovation of buildings, would revitalize declining neighborhoods. In addition, the program stressed the need for the elimination of housing discrimination.[32] The rest of the committee's program centered on avenues of action, providing information on zoning, building codes, information about government funding, and its stipulations. Clearly, this document treated the downtown sector as an organic whole and identified roles for multiple urban players.

It appears, however, that the PCI proposal for mixed-use development was largely ignored because in 1972, Mayor Kyle Testerman commissioned a new study for central Knoxville -- "A Prospectus for Central Knoxville: A Conceptual Framework for the Development and Continued Growth of a New Community in the Heart of Knoxville." The Testerman study concentrated exclusively on the central business district, but its conclusions were strikingly similar to the PCI proposal. Testerman's task force concluded that mixed uses (housing, retail shopping, financial sectors, nightlife zones, light industrial activity, and offices) were essential elements of flourishing urban space. It called for more private development, but its goals and methods, such as integrated initiative and planning, were the same.[33] On a new note, more integrated

[32] Ibid., 13-18.

[33] Mayor's Downtown Task Force, A Prospectus for Central Knoxville: A Planning Study By the Mayor's Downtown Task Force (Knoxville: 1972),1-9.

energy concepts emerged in the Testerman study. Working with the Knoxville Utilities Board (KUB), the plan called for integrated energy provision and a new infrastructural design for the downtown district. The project would more efficiently link downtown units with each other while energy would be supplied from one source at one location.

By 1974 everyone knew this -- the UT report explained the impact of the energy crisis on the state. The most interesting conclusion of their study projected a continued reliance on oil, despite the fact that these planners foresaw the availability of other fuel sources by 1980. They anticipated that few Tennesseans would change their energy use patterns. The Tennessee State Planning Office's failure to pursue alternative sources seemed to confirm this sentiment.[34] Nonetheless, some Knoxvillians were already reconsidering their relationship with energy. As early as 1970, a pattern of well-informed, well-intentioned planning emerged in Knoxville, albeit always on paper. By 1977, planning included a more focused perspective that considered energy and the environment. The Energy Expo of '82 served as a new catalyst for new proposals, but these plans suffered the same paper fate as their predecessors.

According to Wayne Blasius of the Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), the committee created by Kyle Testerman in 1972, the initial thrust for energy planning came from the Energy Opportunities Consortium in 1977. It was the Consortium's sentiment that the city needed to adopt an energy plan in light of the energy-themed

[34] Tennessee State Planning Office, Impact of the Energy Crisis on the Tennessee Economy (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1974) 1-3.

exposition. The MPC met with the Consortium to consider the proposal. Contemporaneously, the U.S. Department of Energy issued funding for the Comprehensive Community Energy Management Program. The program, essentially an inventory of Knoxville energy use followed by recommendations for reductions, paved the way for new ideas and programs concerning energy. With the prospect of federal dollars, energy planning became more attractive to Knoxville decision makers and the city soon received full funding for its government study.[35] With this new study, a steering committee oversaw policy and approved energy objectives and a final plan. Five working committees addressed land use, buildings and structures, transportation, emergency contingency planning, and alternative energy sources in relation to energy consumption.

A private firm, Hittman Associates, conducted the "energy inventory," or a profile of consumption in Knoxville. As a consequence of this inventory, the steering committee identified broad objectives that, in turn, revealed the inefficient use of energy across the city. The objectives were to "establish Knoxville as a recognized center for energy management, research, education, and action."[36] This plan, in conjunction with fair objectives and the urgency caused by the oil scarcity, was designed to ensure that Knoxville's energy woes of the 1970s would never be duplicated. This plan, its creators argued, not only ensured a future free from energy vulnerability, but served as the

[35] Fred Metz, III, "The Local Government Energy Planning Process: Two comparative Case Studies and the Development of an Energy Planning Process Model for Local Government" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1983), 58-59.

[36] Ibid., 61-69.

springboard for the revitalization of Knoxville, both physically and in the national mind. The emphasis on contingency and emergency plans illustrated a desire to avoid at all costs a crisis such as the one that followed the oil embargo. The idea of a new urban identity grounded in energy matched a main goal of the fair, but in the end the vagueness of the plan, which failed to suggest mechanisms for implementation, revealed the halfheartedness of this and other efforts. Knoxville had failed to move beyond the rhetoric of the exposition's promoters and to craft a realistic energy plan that provided means of implementation or prescription.[37]

For example, members of the MPC and a private citizen committee addressed the development of alternative energy sources. Newly hired experts initially concluded that such alternatives should be made mandatory, but eventually, in the city's new energy plan, they became nothing more than unenforceable recommendations. The MPC recognized that Knoxvillians, like most Americans, were not prepared to make the substantial lifestyle changes that alternative energy sources entailed. And as the oil crisis prompted by the OPEC embargo dissipated, so did the sense of urgency necessary to enforce legal prescriptions. The city, like the nation, remained dependent upon foreign oil, but it became less concerned about the consequences of that reliance[38]

The inventory identified energy uses in residences, transportation, commercial facilities, industry, public schools, and municipal institutions.[39] Knoxville's output

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 72-74.

[39] Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, Community Energy Use Profile (Knoxville: 1980), 1-4.

exceeded 79 trillion BTU's of energy, or about 14 million barrels of crude oil a year.[40] The profile allowed planners to "estimate existing and future energy supply and demand relationships" and resulted in "The Community Energy Action Plan."[41] This plan addressed Knoxville's "formidable" energy issues in terms of economics and national security. The plan argued that reliance on foreign oil created vulnerability and undermined the economy on a local and national level. The importation of oil contributed to inflation. By buying energy outside the region, Knoxville spent money that could have been reinvested into the local economy. The plan also observed that the current means of producing energy were increasingly expensive and posed "serious environmental and public safety problems.[42]

Knoxville's energy woes were really no different than the rest of America's. In fact, part of the reason for Knoxville's inertia was that the city attempted to address the problems of a nation. Knoxville's answer to such questions mirrored the national response as well. And like America's perspective on the problem, the plans that emerged were mostly rhetorical in nature. Blind faith in technological innovation and the idea that "someone else" would take care of the energy predicament prevented alternative solutions from becoming a reality. Voluntary community action, without the means for enforcement, was destined to fail. The goals of the various plans for Knoxville were unrealistic and halfhearted at best. The Community Energy Action Plan emphasized

[40] Ibid., 1
[41] Ibid.
[42] Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, Community Energy Action Plan (Knoxville: 1980), 1.

conservation and efficiency, for example, with strategies that included reducing the energy consumed in heating homes through improved building construction and the restoration of older structures. The study points out that this effect could also be achieved through the stricter enforcement of the existing Tennessee Energy Code with respect to building codes, but no officials did so. Another suggestion was that energy consumption involved in transportation might be lowered by carpooling, using public transit, biking, or walking, but provided no rewards for those who did so.[43] The manual asserted that community-wide education workshops focusing on energy would heighten awareness and reinforce individual responsibility.[44] Waste-to-energy facilities would help recycle some energy in the community.[45] "Various nontraditional forms of energy should be encouraged"-- but, of course, always privately.[46] The plan included the municipal administration in education and incentive programs and it called for increased spending for transportation.[47] In the end, however, the expensive plan depended on voluntary action. The Energy Project adopted the plan, but neither the federal, state, nor local government allocated money for its implementation. As a consequence, the plan failed. Like its predecessors, the only potential energy generated by the Community Action Energy plan would come from burning the paper on which it was written.[48]

Concurrent with the Community Action Energy plan, the Metropolitan Planning

[43] Ibid., 3-10.
[44] Ibid., 10-11.
[45] Ibid., 12.
[46] Ibid., 13.
[47] Ibid., 26-29.
[48] Metz, "The Local Government Energy Planning Process", 76.

Commission published the Federal Energy Conservation Program Inventory. This guide provided information on education programs, federal incentives, and local and federal agencies that could provide a multitude of services to interested citizenry. For instance, the handbook offered information on building codes.[49] Although the handbook was to some degree helpful, the job of conservation and environmental awareness was still left to the individual citizen. Two years later the Metropolitan Planning Commission published another supplementary text, "The Impacts of Using Local Energy Supplies." This text analyzed the impact of local energy supply options in terms of their individual functions, costs, and relations to the local economy. This new handbook listed options such as solar water heaters, municipal solid waste incineration, water-to-air heat pumps, air-to-air heat pumps, and alternative vehicles fuels like alcohol, compressed natural gas, and electricity.[50] Although more detailed than its predecessors, the handbook still failed to offer avenues of implementation and enforcement. Both plans from the MPC offered suggestions, but no realistic solutions because they depended solely upon privatized, voluntary action beyond the financial means and personal inclination of most local citizens.

Contemporaneously with the Energy Project, Knoxville received additional federal funds to participate in an Integrated Community Energy System (ICES) study designed to assess the potential for such a system's implementation in Knoxville. ICES was an

[49] Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, Federal Energy Conservation Program Inventory (Knoxville: 1980), 1-3; 12-23.

[50] Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, The Impact of Using Local Energy Supplies (Knoxville: 1982), 1-9; 11-39.

integrated, comprehensive plan designed to fulfill the total energy needs of a community. ICES was supposed to provide energy conservation by "incorporating innovative technologies, energy-conserving community designs, and financial and regulatory mechanisms that facilitate implementation."[51] ICES combined many energy techniques in order to produce an efficient, more earth-friendly mixed-use program that served an entire community. ICES relied primarily on coal and renewable or waste resources. It called for decreased fuel consumption, reserving nonrenewable resources such as oil, and recycling about 32 percent of its energy. The implementation would cost less than Knoxville then paid for energy and the maintenance of an energy infrastructure.[52] Given Knoxville's supposed long-range goals concerning conservation and efficiency, ICES seemed perfect. The plan addressed Knoxville's problem of economic decline by importing less energy and keeping more local funds within the community. In addition, the adoption of such a plan fell directly into line with the energy goals of the fair, and clearly Knoxville had to adopt more than rhetoric to fully reap the residual benefits of the fair. TVA, however, proved to be the stumbling block to the ICES study. Entrenched TVA officials, resistant to changes that threatened their authority, claimed TVA systems were too vast to be refitted and they refused to cooperate.[53] Knoxville essentially squandered federal dollars in the undertaking of this study. That TVA was an obstacle was obvious, and the research done for ICES should have been seen as useless in the

[51] Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, The Potential for Integrated Community Energy Systems (Knoxville: 1978), 1.

[52] Ibid., 2.

[53] Ibid., 2-8;32-35.

beginning. In order to appear more progressive, Knoxville had appropriated the study with no intention of challenging TVA's stronghold. Furthermore, no research even examined whether TVA could duplicate the ICES program. TVA provides energy in eastern Tennessee today in much the same way as it did in 1978.

The last in a long line of plans to be excitedly funded involved the proposed Energy Research Center. Like the others, this plan never moved off the drawing board. The plan involved the residual use of the Lower Second Creek area, and it recommended that the U.S. Pavilion house a permanent Energy Research Center after Expo '82.[54] The Center, to be owned by UT in cooperation with TVA and ORNL, involved seven centers of research and eight special purpose laboratories.[55] The center focused on all energy studies, but gave particular emphasis to studies concerning new energy applications in industry. This center would establish Knoxville as the leader in energy innovation, the guide to worldwide development of sustainable lifestyles. According to its promoters, the center would "enable the separate and independent activities to be combined synergistically into a coherent, problem-focused program which transcends the traditional disciplinary barriers to rapid progress."[56] The planning involved with the center was extensive. Greenways, walkways, and bike trails would surround it. The center itself would be a marvel of passive energy design, utilizing solar energy and mixed-use systems.

---

[54] Economics Research Associates, The Development Potential of Lower Second Creek (Knoxville: 1978), III-4.

[55] The Expo '82 Federal Pavilion residual Use Facility Program, Energy Research Center (Knoxville: 1978), 7-8.

[56] Ibid., 7.

Tree plantings across the city would provide a method for "micro-climate conditioning." Knoxville would become "the energy capital of the world" and a "city built in a forest."[57]

The idea of a permanent Energy Research Center was consistent with intellectual events such as the International Energy Symposiums held in preparation for the fair's theme. The International Energy Symposia Series (IESS) intended to provide a forum for and a guideline to international discussions involving humankind's relationship to energy and its use. The 1980 Symposium, the first of three, sought to establish the nature and parameters of the energy crisis. Its organizers assumed that each nation faced a different crises based on its socioeconomic and political status in the international community. Participants at the first symposium concluded that energy supply and demand must be considered in the context of a varied economic and political context, but systematic policies regulating energy consumption were essential to the global community.[58] The second meeting in 1981 discussed nuclear power and biomass energy. The symposium presented differing perspectives from developed and undeveloped countries and from market and nonmarket economies. Such presentations established the divergent energy needs and objectives that resulted from different levels of economic development.[59] The third session in 1982, devoted to government policies for energy distribution and

[57] Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, After Expo (Knoxville: 1979), ii.

[58] Robert A. Bohm, Lillian A Clinard, and Mary R. English,eds., Toward An Efficient Energy Future: Proceedings of the International Energy Symposium I (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1981), vii-xi.

[59] Robert A. Bohm, Lillian A Clinard, and Mary R. English,eds., Toward An Efficient Energy Future: Proceedings of the International Energy Symposium II (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1982), vi-ix.

consumption, led to an agreement that the fifty participating nations would meet biannually to further their innovation and understanding. The symposia attempted to address energy crises and sustainability on a global scale. Although fueled by good intentions and filled with good ideas, they failed to accomplish anything concrete. The meetings did not continue after the fair. Finally, funds for construction of the U.S. pavilion fell short. A temporary structure inappropriate for residual use appeared instead and the permanent Energy Research Center became little more than a remembered dream. Although an Energy Research Center does operate within the UT system currently, it is not the ambitious center that was planned. Knoxvillians could not, or would not, shoulder the costs of their ambitions.[60]

The concept of the Energy Research Center had centered exposition rhetoric, but it too had failed. Its objectives--to advance energy innovation, increase global cooperation, and to renovate Knoxville--were the fair's objectives. To some extent, they were Knoxvillians' objectives. But Knoxvillians' visions of the future never matured past the planning process. Because of the oil crisis, plans for reducing energy usage and introducing alternative fuels had an urgency attached to them in the 1970s. By the time of the fair, this urgency had dissipated.

The 1982 International Energy Exposition promised many effects. Only one was ever really accomplished--the fair itself. Knoxville's good intentions, exhibited in detailed

[60] Robert A. Bohm, Lillian A Clinard, and Mary R. English,eds., Toward An Efficient Energy Future: Proceedings of the International Energy Symposium III (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1983), vii-ix.

planning, proved unsustainable for many reasons. The plans mostly called upon private citizen action that made large-scale consensus difficult to achieve. The media disseminated rhetoric about energy, but rarely contemplated the very real changes that must accompany greater efficiency. Because local government never stood firmly behind the plans, there were no means for implementation or enforcement. Finally, the energy crisis appeared to be over by 1982. Knoxvillians abandoned their halfhearted commitment to a more sustainable world, and with it, their vision of a brighter urban future.

CONCLUSION

"History will judge us kindly."[1]

Optimism had marked the fair's opening day. Although just shy of the highest attendance targets, more than eighty thousand visitors made the scruffy little city seem as if it had accomplished its goals that day simply by hosting a World's Fair.[2] Yet, by year's end, Knoxvillians had abandoned their other ambitions for the exposition. The fair ultimately did little more than deliver on promised interstate highway improvements. Instead, its legacy proved surprising; it had altered the tradition of development in Knoxville.[3] The fair, funded through government and nongovernment sources, began a trend toward privatized, satellite development of the downtown areas. Subsequent renovations, regardless of their overall success, illustrated a persistent lack of consensus concerning urban renewal in Knoxville and the apparent unwillingness of power brokers to seek consensus.

Knoxville's flings with community energy programs and beautification gestures subsequent to the fair, coupled with the ultimate failure of residual development at the Lower Second Creek site, demonstrated that Knoxvillians did not agree on their city's identity. Furthermore, Knoxville's municipal structure did not provide the means for the

---

[1] The Knoxville Journal, 3 May 1982. Attributed to Mayor Randy Tyree at the opening ceremonies.

[2] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 2 May 1982.

[3] New York Times, 30 May, 1981; William Bruce Wheeler, Manuscript, 2003: 170-173 .

implementation or enforcement of any approved plans.[4] Citizens involved in purchasing, renovating, and restoring areas such as Fourth and Gill, Mechanicsville, Old North Knoxville, the Old City, Gay Street, and Market Square rejected consensus and rarely sought municipal approval beyond basic construction permits. Knoxvillians abandoned systemic, state-sponsored planning that addressed the needs of the whole community and instead transformed neighborhoods and urban satellite zones into privately owned, socially-restrictive residential and commercial sectors. This new type of development was a different beast. Prior to the fair, most city planning occurred through municipal channels with some input from community members. The fair, supposedly a part of that older tradition, became the agenda of an elite minority and the augury of future policies. This group of organizers, ranging from bankers, lawyers, and developers, represented a new aristocracy. Development-minded, this small group of organizers cajoled, persuaded, and eventually forced the community to pay for the venture with both city and private funds. After the Exposition's failure to make good on its associated promises, Knoxvillians decided to take matters, and money, into their own hands. Privatized development in areas such as the Old City and Market Square, represented a change in traditional Knoxville urban development. The community was

[4] For more information concerning various development plans, see: The Mayor's Downtown Task Force, Prospectus for Central Knoxville: A Conceptual Framework for the Development and Continued Growth of a New Community in the Heart of Knoxville, August, 1972; Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, The Potential for Integrated Community Energy Systems June, 1980; Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, Community Energy Action Plan, 1980; Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission, After Expo, Prepared by the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team, March, 1979. These are by far not the only examples of plans that failed, but are the ones chiefly targeted by the author.

not consulted. [5]

The same can be said of the local environmental movement, at least as it pertained to energy usage. The high hopes the fair engendered were no longer feasible in a city without lines at the gas pumps--a city that lacked the means and the will to pursue permanent conservation plans.[6] In this pattern, it mirrored the nation. Knoxville was not some aberrant villain. The crisis had seemingly abated. In the midst of the 1980s oil glut, Americans forgot their past energy troubles. What seemed a pressing issue in 1976 was no longer a grave concern.

Promoters of the fair had dealt deftly with this unexpected twist for six months in 1982, claiming they offered a timely reminder to a nation that had forgotten its previous woes and their possible return. They reminded the visitors of the dangers of dependence on foreign oil. Yet the lack of consensus exhibited in urban planning in Knoxville duplicated underlying problems in the fair. Pavilions presented mixed messages about the future of energy, reflecting the federal government's confusion concerning the issue as well, particularly with the shift in presidential administrations.[7] The fair promoters sought to capitalize on environmental concerns, but much of their rhetoric was unrealistic. Knoxville tried to exploit its proximity to the TVA and ORNL, but its planners and promoters never developed true partnerships with these entities to ensure cleaner, more efficient, less expensive energy sources.

---

[5]Knoxville Community Improvement Program. Initial Program for Community Improvement, 1970-1976. Knoxville: November, 1970.

[6] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 2 May 1982.

[7] New York Times, 2 May 1982; see also The Knoxville Journal, 3 May 1982.

The confusion of the fair's theme came as no surprise, given the myriad uses of terms such as environment, energy, and green. The meaning of energy varied greatly, alternately referring to resources such as oil, coal, water, nuclear power, and even the enthusiasm of Knoxvillians and fair participants. Environment represented both physical space, whether it be on a community, national, or global level, and a "green" nature to be preserved or conserved. Given the competing definitions, incomplete goals, and inadequate long-term planning, it is little surprise that the fair failed to correct Knoxville's urban ills. An identity was never clearly formulated; thus, an identity never truly emerged.

Instead, Knoxville has earned a rather hodgepodge reputation, stemming from the exposition experience and subsequent private developments. Although citizens have done a great deal to renovate sectors of the downtown area, no integrated whole has resulted. Knoxville's urban "center" is composed of four discrete, disconnected urban zones. This partitioning, a trend begun by Expo '82, renders the central business district of Knoxville static; Knoxville's "systems" function neither interdependently nor as a whole.[8] In fact, the systems hardly function at all.

Haphazard, shortsighted development in Knoxville has become one of the most lasting legacies of the 1982 International Energy Exposition. The exposition, which promised fifty years of progress in five, failed in almost every way.[9] And while the federal government developed highways as promised, even those roads proved

[8] Ibid.
[9] Dodd, Expose, 1.

detrimental because they exacerbated downtown fragmentation. In the end, the promoters' broken promises cost the city of Knoxville some $32 million.[10]

Jake Butcher, the exposition's chairman, had announced in the opening ceremony that "today you can see that we've brought in the harvest...A year ago this land was blighted. Today it is transformed."[11] This statement reflected what Knoxvillians hoped the fair had achieved on a community level. Ultimately, such desires went unfulfilled. Just two years later, the New York Times assessed the exposition site as "the desolate legacy of the Knoxville's World's Fair." All that remained was the Sunsphere and, perhaps symbolic of the fair's empty promises, it housed nothing. As Joe Dodd put it, "in terms of what the promoters promised it would do for Knoxville, the fair can only be described as a bust."[12] The "scruffy little city did it," but it was questionable what the scruffy little city actually did.[13] Sadly, history has not treated the 1982 World's Fair so kindly after all.

[10] New York Times, 1 November 1982.
[11] Knoxville News-Sentinel, 2 May 1982.
[12] New York Times, 18 May 1984; Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 1 November 1982.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Bohm, Robert A., Lillian A. Clinard, and Mary R. English, eds. World Energy Production and Productivity: Proceedings of the International Energy Symposium I. Knoxville: Energy, Environment, and Resources Center (UT), 1980. Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1981.

Bohm, Robert A., Lillian A. Clinard, and Mary R. English, eds. World Energy Production and Productivity: Proceedings of the International Energy Symposium II. Knoxville: Energy, Environment, and Resources Center (UT), 1981. Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1982.

Bohm, Robert A., Lillian A. Clinard, and Mary R. English, eds. World Energy Production and Productivity: Proceedings of the International Energy Symposium III. Knoxville: Energy, Environment, and Resources Center (UT), 1982. Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1983.

Economics Research Associates. Development Potential of Lower Second Creek. February, 1978.

Economics Research Corporation. Economic Feasibility of Energy Expo '82. Knoxville: 1978.

The Expo '82 Federal Pavilion Residual Use Facility Program. Energy Research Center. Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1978.

Los Angeles Times, 9 April 2003.

Knoxville Area Urban League. An Assessment of Socio-Economic Problems Likely to Result From the Proposed Knoxville International Energy Exposition. Knoxville: Knoxville Area Urban League, 1977.

Knoxville Community Improvement Program. Initial Program for Community Improvement, 1970-1976. Knoxville: November, 1970.

Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. After Expo. Prepared by the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team. March, 1979.

Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. Community Energy Action Plan, 1980.

Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. Community Energy Use Profile. September, 1980.

Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. Federal Energy Conservation Program Inventory. June 1980.

Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. Impacts of Using Local Energy Supplies. Conducted by the Energy Project. July, 1982.

Knoxville/Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission. The Potential for Integrated Community Energy Systems. June, 1980.

Knoxville Journal, 1977-1979.

Knoxville News-Sentinel, 1977-1979.

The Mayor's Downtown Task Force. Prospectus for Central Knoxville: A Conceptual Framework for the Development and Continued Growth of a New Community in the Heart of Knoxville. August, 1972.

New York Times, 1981-1982.

Tennessee State Planning Office. Impact of the Energy Crisis on the Tennessee Economy. June 1974.

Tomlinson, Kenneth Y. "The Shocking Saga of Expo '82." Reader's Digest 691 (November 1979): 147-179.

United States Department of Commerce. Final Report of the United States Commissioner General for the Knoxville International Energy Exposition --Energy Expo '82 --to the President of the United States. Washington D.C. : 1982.

United States Department of Commerce. Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Spokane, Washington: 1976.

United States Travel Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Comments and Responses to the Final Environmental Impact Statement. By Haworth and Anderson, Inc. May, 1979

United States Travel Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Comments and Responses to the Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement. By Haworth and Anderson, Inc. August, 1979.

United States Travel Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Draft Final Environmental Impact Statement. By Haworth and Anderson, Inc. December, 1976.

United States Travel Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Final Environmental Impact Statement. By Haworth and Anderson, Inc. March, 1977.

United States Travel Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Supplement to the Final Environmental Impact Statement. By Haworth and Anderson, Inc. May, 1979.

Secondary Sources

Creekmore, Betsey B. Knoxville-- Our Fair City. Knoxville: Greater Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, 1984.

Curti, Merle. "America at the World Fairs, 1851-1893." The American Historical Review 55 (July 1950): 833-877.

Dodd, Joe. Expose: The Real Story Behind the Knoxville World's Fair. Knoxville: Joe Dodd, 1982.

_____. World Class Politics: Knoxville's 1982 World's Fair Redevelopment and Political Process. Salem: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1988.

Goldfield, David R. "The Urban South: A Regional Framework." The American Historical Review 86 (December 1981): 1009-1030.

Hays, Samuel P. Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.

Findlay, John M. Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Jacobs, Jane. The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York: Vintage Books, 1961.

Massey, Oliver Thomas. "An Application of Diffusion of Innovation Theory in the Analysis of Attitudes Toward the 1982 World's Energy Exposition." Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1982.

McDonald, Michael J. and William Bruce Wheeler. Knoxville, Tennessee: Continuity and Change in an Appalachian City. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983.

Meissen, Gregory J. . "A Differential Analysis of the Perceived Social Impact of a World's Exposition." Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1980.

Melosi, Martin V. Effluent America: Cities, Industry, and the Environment. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.

Metz III, Fred H. "The Local Government Energy Planning Process: Two Comparative Case Studies and the Development of an Energy Planning Process Model for Local Government." Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1983.

Monkonnen, Eric H. America Becomes Urban: The Development of U.S. Cities and Towns. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Nienaber Clarke, Jeanne and Hanna J. Cortner eds., The State and Nature: Voices Heard, Voices Unheard in America's Environmental Dialogue (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 286.

Rothman, Hal K. The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998.

Tarr, Joel A. The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective. Akron: University of Akron Press, 1996.

Williams, James C. Energy and the Making of Modern California. Akron: University of Akron Press, 1997.

Wilson, William H. The City Beautiful Movement. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

Woodward, C. Vann. Origins of the New South, 1877-1913. Louisiana: University of Louisiana Press, 1951.

VITA

Jennifer Bradley was born on August 24, 1978. She was born and raised in Nashville, Tennessee. She attended Beech Elementary School, T.W. Hunter Middle School, and Beech High School. She graduated from high school in 1996. Jennifer then attended Maryville College in Maryville, Tennessee. She received her B.A. in history in 2000. Jennifer is currently finishing her M.A. degree in history at the University of Tennessee, and is slated to graduate in 2003.